

Pre-Fort Hood History at Fort Hood: Fort Hood's Cultural Resource Management Program's Inaugural Lunchtime Seminar

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The Cultural Resource Management (CRM) program at Fort Hood held the inaugural brown bag lunch seminar Thursday October 5th. Marie Blake, a contracting archaeologist from Prewitt and Associates of Austin spoke about her work on Fort Hood's historic archaeology. She explained how the beginning of World War II ended a way of life for many people here in Central Texas. The first and most immediate impact was the mandatory condemning of land owned by farming and ranching families to make way for the new Army facility. It is their legacy and that of their forebears that is the subject of on-going historical and archeological research at Fort Hood. As an historic archaeologist, Ms. Blake reviewed each of the abandoned and destroyed farmsteads and judged the level of their archaeological integrity for further archaeological work. Her work included archeological, archival, and oral history research. In 1996, 85 historic sites were assessed which included documenting features and artifacts, to set standards of archeological integrity. Her work gives us a better idea of the types of resources that are present, such as hand-dug wells, subsurface cisterns, tank cisterns, root cellars, foundations, cemeteries, stock tanks, and drilled wells.

Some of the archival research focused on individual sites, and resulted in the compilation of chain-of-title research for all recorded historic sites on Fort Hood. Other archival research has resulted in the development of a comprehensive historic context that is helping Fort Hood's CRM program form a basis for future research. A general history of the Fort Hood area is in draft form and will also be available to the public after the new year. An announcement will be made when this book is available to the public. This new book will be a popular report as opposed to an academic document. It will include color photographs, a history of Fort Hood's development, but most importantly how establishing the military base affected the people who worked the land.

The next project will draw on dozens of interviews of former inhabitants and will result a series of popular reports. Documentary and oral informant research are excellent ways to regain the stories of the many individuals, families, tenants, and communities of the area from the 1880s to the 1940's. Archeological excavation of this period is augmented with historical research to gain a clearer picture of these people's lives. Many of the individuals and families who once lived on the lands taken for Fort Hood still live in the surrounding communities. They have first-hand knowledge of the area's history. Some families and communities hold reunions, or visit old home places on Memorial Day, with access and escorts provided by the Army. If you would like to participate in this project or have a family member who would like to participate by loaning photos or recounting their life here before Fort Hood was established, please contact Ms. Stephanie Bandy at the Fort Hood CRM Office (288-0846).